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THIS IS A
CALL TO PRAYER
FOR
THE LORD'S WORK
IN
COLOMBIA

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INFORMATION SERVICE OF THE MENNONITE MISSION IN COLOMBIA

EVANGELISM-IN-DEPTH IN ACTION

The first training institutes for pastors and missionaries were held the last week in February and most of March in various centers of Colombia. At these institutes, church leaders were given an orientation to the program of Evangelism-in-Depth as planned for the year. In the four days of study and inspiration, they learned how to put the program into action in their local churches. The program includes organizing prayer cells, teaching the training courses, carrying out effective visitation, holding evangelistic campaigns, and other activities. It is gratifying to observe the joy and expectation of these men as they seek ways to become better leaders and involve their members in this great task of church extension.

Colombians have become aware that Christ must come first in their lives and that much time must be spent in prayer in preparation for personal evangelism. They are also aware that if they share their resources through Evangelism-in-Depth, God will multiply these resources. They are ready to work together in evangelism, literacy, visitation, medical work, finances--yes, all that is at their disposal so that many might be added to the church.

At the training institutes, Janet Soldner gave the spiritual challenge of children and women's work, as well as informing the pastors of the year's plan. She is now helping to organize, throughout the central zone of Colombia, training courses for local Christians to carry on the evangelization of children in their locality.



Janet Soldner (right) and other sponsors of children's work





During the first months of this year, organization of prayer cells in Christian homes was emphasized. More than 1,500 cells have been organized in Colombia.

From April to June, every church will have classes to train lay workers for an intensive visitation program in June in an effort to take the gospel to every home in the country. Pictured at the left with Jerry Kagele are three Guambiano Indians from southern Colombia, proudly exhibiting their training manuals. Special manuals have also been prepared on children, youth, and women's work.

Several years ago when the Colombian church was undergoing persecution, Christians in the Congo, with the Colombian map spread before them, were praying for their oppressed brethren. Their prayers were not in vain. Today Colombia is on the brink of a spiritual awakening. Everywhere there are unprecedented opportunities for preaching the gospel.

Advisers for Evangelism-in-Depth, under the auspices of the Latin American Mission, come from the United States, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Peru, and Argentina. They inform us that we are further ahead in the organization than were other countries at this time of the year.

There is no doubt about our command. Jesus Christ made it very clear. We are to take the good news of salvation to every creature and every nation, and we must proclaim this message in such a way that all can hear, understand, and receive the gift of new life in Jesus Christ. Our goal is the total evangelization of Colombia. The Christians must first be challenged to share their faith. Man can only prepare the scene; the Holy Spirit does the mobilization. It takes faith and obedience to do this work. All must do their part: men, women, children, new believers, mature Christians, intellectuals, everyone. God has done great things, and is continuing to do miracles in Latin America.

MENNONITE PARTICIPATION IN EVANGELISM-IN-DEPTH

The Mennonite churches here are entering wholeheartedly into the total program of Evangelism-in-Depth. Not only are the churches organizing prayer cells, carrying on training sessions, and planning for visitation and campaigns, but their leaders are also active in the organizational committees. Janet Soldner, full-time worker loaned to Evangelism-in-Depth, is Assistant National Coordinator of children's work. In the area where our rural churches are located, Jacob Dyck is president of the directing committee; George Ediger is vice-president; John Wiebe assists in the area of special forms of witness; and Margaret Ediger is promoter of women's work. Eunice Hernandez is promoter of children's work in the Ibague area, and Reitha Klassen serves on the committee directing children's work in Bogota.



RECENT CHURCH GROWTH

Remarkable church growth is evident--a thrilling beginning for the year of Evangelism-in-Depth. Between December 31 and February 25, a series of baptismal services have been held in all six of our present congregations. Thirty new members were received through baptism, four by letter of transfer and four through reaffirmation of faith. We believe that this year we will witness a continuing increase in church membership. Since the enemy of the soul will not accept this growth of God's kingdom without resistance, we solicit your prayers for these new church members.



SHORT-TERM VOLUNTEERS ARRIVE

On January 13, Peter and Ella Kehler, short-term workers from Clearbrook, British Columbia, arrived in Colombia to help in the mission program. Their service has been significant and varied. One month they helped in the construction of the church in Anolaima; then two and one-half weeks finishing the new parsonage in Bogota so that the Glendon Klaassens could move in; later, several weeks in La Mesa; and, finally, in Cachipay, entering in the agricultural ministry initiated by Peter Harder and Steve Pankratz. Our heartfelt thanks go to the

Kehlers for the great help they have given us and for their willingness to sacrifice in the Lord's kingdom.

VOLUNTEERS JOIN STAFF AT CACHIPAY

Steve and Elizabeth Ann Pankratz, recent arrivals under the voluntary service program, are working with the Colombian mission staff for a period of three years. At present, Liz teaches in the mission school near Cachipay and Steve assists Peter Harder in the community and agricultural development program. These Bluffton graduates are well qualified for the work--Steve has a BS degree in economics with an emphasis on agricultural development, and Liz has a degree in elementary education. Their arrival was preceded by six months of language study in San Jose, Costa Rica.



MORE VOLUNTEERS TO BOGOTA

Jerry and Judy Kagele are the sixth couple to join the voluntary service unit in Bogota. Judy is an elementary teacher at the Colegio United States and Jerry is engaged as the photographer and publicity agent for Evangelism-in-Depth. Jerry is originally from Ritzville, Washington, and a graduate of Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. Judy is from Hutchinson, Kansas, and also attended Bethel College.

TWO SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN IBAGUE

January 6, 1968, marked the official organization of the church in Ibague. On March 3, the lot on Main Street was dedicated. This was an impressive service in which many ministers from the city participated. The members of this church are enthusiastic about future expansion possibilities. From now on the services will be held at the lot instead of at the parsonage.



LATIN AMERICAN MENNONITE CONGRESS

The first Latin American Mennonite Congress was held in Bogota, February 12-18. Twenty official delegates attended, coming from ten South and Central American republics, plus Canada, United States, and Puerto Rico. Ten others attended as observers. Delegates were sent by the (Old) Mennonite Church, the Evangelical Mennonite Church, and the General Conference Mennonite Church. Rev. Armando Hernandez and Rev. George Ediger represented the Colombian Mennonite Church as the official delegates. The Mennonite Brethren Church had several observers. Former president of the Mennonite Seminary of Montevideo, Uruguay, Bishop Nelson Litwiler, served as coordinator of the Congress. COMBS (Council of Mission Board Secretaries) sponsored the Congress.

Much time was devoted to reports from the various fields and special areas of work, such as radio and literature. It was interesting to learn of the history and development of the work in the various fields. God has graciously blessed and the results today are impressive. Those attending the Congress recognized the challenge to expand the efforts of witnessing for Christ and to use the present opportunities to the greatest advantage for the cause of Christ and the church. Named to an organizing committee for a Second Latin American Mennonite Congress (perhaps in 1971) were the following: Armando Hernandez, Colombia, president; Raul Rosado, Puerto Rico; and Ernesto Suarez, Uruguay.

CHURCH LEADERS VISIT THE FIELD

We were delighted to have with us, February 19 and 20, Rev. Andrew Shelly, executive secretary of the Board of Missions, Newton, Kansas, who discussed such matters as mission-church relations, future mission strategy, our institutions, and our agricultural program. Brother Shelly, with his many years of experience with the Board of Missions, has travels in many parts of the world, and his wide knowledge and understanding of missions, helped us to focus our attention on priorities and gave us wise counsel.

Following the Mennonite Congress, Rev. Nelson Litwiler spoke in the Colombian churches for three weeks. Christians and non-Christians were deeply moved by his enthusiastic, instructive, and practical messages.



SCHOOL SESSION RESUMES



La Mesa staff

Our two schools are now in full swing. Colegio Menno, La Mesa, has an enrollment of 83 students and is staffed by Ana Pedraza, Natalia Suarez, and Victor Vargas. Vernelle Yoder is again director-teacher of the school.

The Colegio Americano in Cachipay has 63 students. The teachers are Fanny Gomez, Luz Miriam Salazar, and Bertha Mae Reiff, who also serves as director of the school. Claire Harder and Elizabeth Pankratz teach English and music; Steve

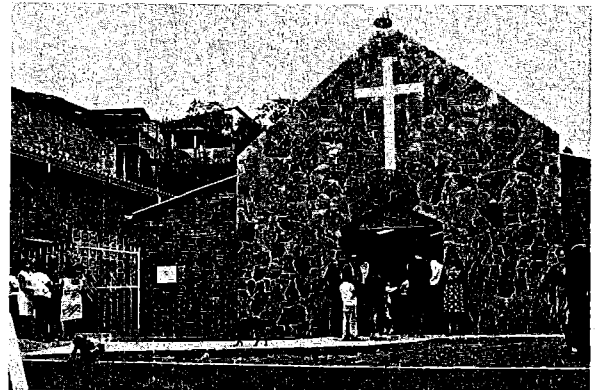
Pankratz teaches crafts. All the Colombian teachers are graduates of our school in Cachipay and three have graduated from the Normal School in Ibague.



Cachipay staff

ANOLAIMA DEDICATES NEW CHURCH

Exactly six months after the ground-breaking ceremony and initiation of the construction in Anolaima, the dedication of the completed temple and Sunday school was celebrated on February 25. A series of church-centered activities helped the congregation express their joy and gratitude to God. What one happy church member phrased "a week's festival" began on Saturday afternoon with a baptismal service, at which time four adults made public confession of their faith.



Sunday was filled with special events. In the morning, after an inspiring address by Rev. Andrew Shelly, and a fitting message for new church members by Rector Hector Valencia of the Ibague Christian Normal School, six new members were received into the church, and a large group of children were dedicated to the Lord by their parents.

At the afternoon dedication service, about 260 visitors and members of the congregation filled the new sanctuary, beautiful in its simplicity, and designed through voluntary labor by Eldon Bargaen, Avon Lake, Ohio. Pastors of Mennonite churches and leaders from several other denominations, as well as Andrew Shelly, participated in the service of dedication to help make February 25 live long in the memory of the Anolaima congregation.



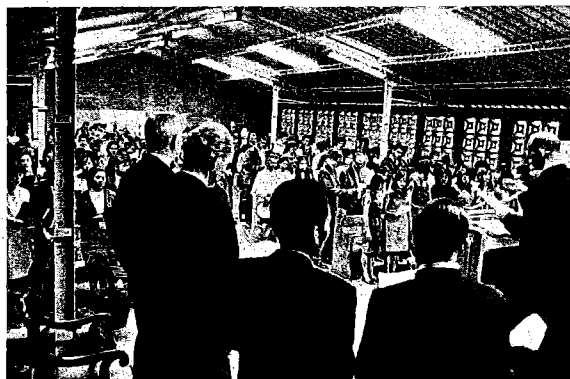


The dedicatory message was given by Bishop Nelson Litwiler, veteran missionary to Argentina and former president of the Montevideo Seminary.

The day was climaxed with an inspiring message by Rev. Glendon Klaassen followed by the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Special services directed toward the non-Christians were held February 26-29. Many came to learn and grow under Rev. Litwiler's dynamic preaching.

The Anolaima congregation is grateful to their friends in North America who have generously shared in the costs of the construction, thus helping them to enter more quickly the wider and more effective ministry which the new facilities provide.



KLAASSENS RETURN TO COLOMBIA

The Glendon Klaassen family returned to Bogota, Colombia, February 9. The Klaassens have assumed the pastorate of the First Mennonite Church, Bogota, in answer to a call extended by the congregation last October. The Klaassens spent eight years in Ibagu  and Cachipay, Colombia.

The Klaassens come to the Bogota church with fresh ideas after a year's study furlough spent at Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana.

On Sunday morning, February 25, the leadership responsibilities of the First Mennonite Church, Bogota, were formally transferred to the Klaassens in an installation service conducted by Rev. Howard Habegger. The Habeggers pastored the church since its beginning.

Howard and Marlene Habegger and three children left Colombia the following week for an extended study furlough in the States. The Habeggers will be speaking in many General Conference churches during the first six months of their furlough, including an appearance at the General Conference, Estes Park, Colorado, in July.

